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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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22 October 1959

DAILY BRIEF

25X1. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

II. ASIA-AFRICA

N.D. Laos: The government's trial of Prince Souphanouvong and other imprisoned pro-Communist leaders, which will begin next week, will intensify antigovernment sentiment in the country and be taken by Hanoi as a further provocation in violation of the Geneva truce. These leaders have been under arrest since July, when the present Communist rebellion began, and their control of the pro-Communist movement presumably has long since passed to those who went underground at that time.

UN Secretary General Hammarskjold remains confident that the USSR will go along with his idea of establishing a UN representative in Laos with the tacit consent of the Security Council. He

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[believes Moscow will want to avoid a formal vote since a UN presence would be established in Laos whether the USSR liked it or not.]

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Watch Committee Conclusions: [Situations susceptible of direct exploitation by Sino-Soviet bloc action which would jeopardize US interests exist in Laos and in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq.]

Laos: [Dissident activity has remained at a low level. This activity may increase in intensity, however, if the Lao Government carries out its announced plan to put Neo Lao Hak Zat leaders on public trial. Direct North Vietnamese military intervention is not likely in the immediate future.]

Middle East: [Although order has been maintained, the situation in Iraq remains tense. With the approaching trials of Qasim's alleged attackers and the anticipated release of Qasim from the hospital, the possibility of further assassination attempts or coups is increased. In these circumstances, the UAR may become more deeply involved.]

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III. THE WEST

Cuba: The resignation on 20 October and subsequent arrest of popular provincial military commander Huber Matos was apparently caused by his opposition to Prime Minister Fidel Castro's support of increasingly powerful extremists, led by Raul Castro and "Che" Guevara, in the Cuban Government. The prime minister flew to Camaguey to supervise the arrest of Matos, one of his most trusted associates during the fight to oust Batista. Matos has been accused of "high treason against the revolution" and may be made an object lesson to warn others against taking such a stand.

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DAILY BRIEF

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

Situation in Laos

The Laotian Government's trial of Prince Souphanouvong and other leaders of the pro-Communist Neo Lao Hak Zat (NLHZ), beginning on 26 October, may make them martyrs in the eyes of the population and provoke a sharp reaction from North Vietnam and possibly other bloc countries. Souphanouvong and his colleagues have been under arrest since July, when the current Communist rebellion began. The Communists will view the trials as a further violation of the Geneva truce. Souphanouvong and another NLHZ leader served in the short-lived coalition government formed in implementation of the 1957 unification accord, which had been called for by the Geneva agreements.

Charged with crimes against the security of the state, the defendants could receive the death sentence. The American Embassy expects judgments to be handed down late next month.

[UN Secretary General Hammarskjold, meanwhile, remains confident that the USSR will go along with his idea of establishing a UN presence in Laos under his administrative authority with the tacit consent of the Security Council. He plans to tell Soviet First Deputy Minister Kuznetsov bluntly, "You will get a UN presence in Laos whether you like it or not. Which way do you want it; the quiet way without a formal council vote or after a veto and full acrimonious debate in the General Assembly?" Hammarskjold believes that a UN presence developed without acrimony and without Soviet opposition would be more manageable. This procedure would also avoid some of the "political delicacies" that inevitably result from a UN action achieved despite Soviet opposition.]

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III. THE WEST

Opposition Within Castro Government

Strong opposition has evidently been aroused among some of Fidel Castro's trusted officials by his support of leftists and pro-Communists in the Cuban Government. The resignation this week of Camaguey provincial military governor Huber Matos, one of Castro's most respected lieutenants during the fight against Batista, is reliably reported to have been due to his conviction that extremists led by Raul Castro and "Che" Guevara are now firmly in control of the Castro regime. There have been reports of dissatisfaction over Communist influence by other provincial officials, but this is the first instance of a public stand by such a popular figure.

The prime minister reacted violently to the resignation, flying to Camaguey on 21 October to supervise personally Matos' arrest on charges of high treason and to arouse the peasants. [redacted]

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[redacted] Matos believes he will be maligned like other officials whose criticisms have infuriated Castro. In the latter's present violent mood, he may make Matos an object lesson for other, less outspoken critics of his actions. The prime minister appeared to be in a highly emotional and aggressive state during an unexpected speech on 19 October when he again lashed out against alleged opponents of the revolution in a strongly anti-US speech. He vehemently endorsed Raul Castro and "Che" Guevara as true exponents whom he relied upon to carry on the revolution, "whatever happens." [redacted]

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